

BIRDS OBSERVED AT SANTA BARBARA,
CALIFORNIA.

BY W. A. JEFFRIES.

IN THE early spring of 1883 the old Mission town of Santa Barbara in California, still a little off the main line of travel, seemed to offer to my brother and myself in search of quiet an escape from the ever flitting excursionist and the feeling of unrest and annoyance that his presence is very apt to cause his neighbor.

Finding on our arrival, March 6, that it was not practicable to take rooms out of the town, we settled ourselves well out toward the Mission, on the edge of a lot several acres in extent covered with trees and shrubbery. Placed as we were, early morning collecting could not be done with regularity, as within the town limits shooting was not allowed, while our horses, upon which we relied almost entirely, could not be had before seven. Our habit was to make as early a start as possible, in the saddle if intending to go into the hills, in a buggy if up the valley. We collected either by shooting from the saddle when necessary, or on foot when, as seldom happened, the cañons were inaccessible to our unshod native horses.

At the time of our visit the edge of the town reached nearly to the Mission, beyond which the choice spots only were cultivated, much of the land being used for grazing. The shore line was partly a bluff, partly gently inclined beach with, as a rule, small lagoons or mud flats behind it, at all events land lower than the crown of the beach. Salt water marshes were absent.

In every case where a scientific name is given we took skins. Birds simply seen, I omit.

Previous to March 30 we failed to note any spring flight. Some of the species were present in larger numbers than on our arrival, but new comers were not noted.

Tilled lands were the feeding grounds of *Sturnella magna neglecta*, *Xanthocephalus xanthocephalus*, and very large flocks of *Scolecophagus cyanocephalus*. Passing up the valley, *Chondestes grammacus strigatus*, usually in pasture lands, *Agelaius gubernator*, near pools, as also *Ægialitis vocifera*, were abundant. Large flocks of *Carpodacus mexicanus frontalis*

were daily noted all along the valley. Wherever the finely powdered soil had been stripped of vegetation and allowed to bake in the sun *Spizella cunicularia hypogea* was found.

Cathartes aura proved abundant and very tame. Several Hawks were seen, but proving shy, we took *Accipiter cooperi* and *Falco sparverius* only. *Zenaidura macroura* showing a preference for cultivation was rare. Two or three pairs of *Geococcyx californianus* were seen almost daily, and were not very shy unless chased, when they at once made for brush.

Of the *Zonotrichiæ* the most abundant was *gambeli*, next so *coronata*, but few of *intermedia* were taken.

Woodpeckers, if we except *Colaptes cafer*, found everywhere, were not common, presumably from the lack of heavy timber. *Melanerpes formicivorus bairdi* we found almost exclusively in live oaks. *Dryobates nuttallii* was seen and taken, as also *D. pubescens gairdnerii*, the latter being the rarer. *Salpinctes obsoletus*, found in rocky cañons only, was seldom seen. One such cañon to which a shepherd boy took us in search of this Wren was fairly alive with snakes; every step seemed to startle up one or more. Our bare-footed guide soon beat a retreat.

The common Hummer found everywhere was *Trochilus anna*. *T. rufus*, although numerous, was very generally found in or near live-oak groves. In such a grove we found it breeding in numbers April 16. The nests were placed on the under side of the fronds of a large fern which grew luxuriantly in the deep shade.

March 14, a single specimen of *Junco hyemalis* was taken from a flock of seemingly similar birds. When startled they flew too near a house to allow of our taking a second example. *J. h. oregonus* was not seen by us before April 13.

Callipepla californica vallicola, although abundant, was not easily taken because of their fondness for treeing on the cañon side, or racing when on the level. *Aphelocoma californica*, *Melospiza fasciata heermanni*, *Pipilo fuscus crissalis*, *Vireo huttoni*, *Dendroica auduboni*, *Parus inornatus*, *Chamaea fasciata henshawii*, *Psaltriparus minimus californicus* were all present in good numbers, as also *Troglodytes ædon parkmanii* on the higher ground almost exclusively. *Sialia mexicana*, breeding March 20, *Melospiza lincolni*, *Poliophtila cærulea*, and *Sayornis saya* were none of them common. This was the case also with *Sayor-*

nis nigricans before the migration arrived. *Empidonax difficilis* and *Spinus psaltria* appeared March 18, *S. tristis*, much less common than *psaltria*, on March 20.

A single Robin was shot from the saddle out of a flock of three or four flying over a road on a cañon side. However, as the horse declined to stop for some distance, it was not marked down and could not be found. No more were seen by us.

It not being possible for us to hire the only boat in the town, as it was in constant use as a fisherman, we were not able to do any collecting off shore. Cormorants were abundant, sunning themselves on the piles of an old wharf, but well out of our reach. Scoters in large flocks and many Divers used as a feeding ground the strip of water about one quarter of a mile or less broad between the beach and the seaweed which, growing very long and lying on the surface of the water in dense masses, forms a very fair breakwater along the entire beach at Santa Barbara, the line of seaweed being approximately parallel with the beach line.

Occasionally we saw Scoters sunning themselves on the crest of the beach, and by running our horses so as to head them off managed to take a few. All were *Oidemia perspicillata*.

On foggy mornings, if by chance we could shoot a single Gull, others were soon decoyed in to the fallen bird; in this way, though not caring from such data to hazard an opinion as to their relative abundance, we took *Larus glaucescens*, *L. occidentalis*, and *L. californicus*, and did not consider either species as rare.

A small flock of Gallinules lived in a patch of reeds on the edge of a lagoon into which *Mergus serrator* came rarely. *Cistothorus palustris paludicola*, from lack of proper ground, was also rare.

On the crown of the beach *Otocoris alpestris rubea*, *Anthus pensilvanicus* and *Ægialitis vocifera* were all abundant. *Ægialitis*, we thought we had good reason to believe was breeding, but failed to find a nest. Of the *Anmodrami*, *A. beldingi* was more often taken at or next to the shore line, *A. sandwichensis alaudinus* more inland.

Tachycineta thalassina in abundance, *T. bicolor* sparingly, were seen more frequently at the water's edge than inland, but were found occasionally well up the valley.

All of the foregoing were taken previous to March 24, on

which date we rode to the Ojai Valley not finding any new species; Quails, Jays and Woodpeckers were much more numerous than at Santa Barbara. In the Ojai we were detained by heavy rains one day. The second day, the rain falling heavier than ever, we rode back over a badly washed road; frequent patches of adobe clay proved slippery even for California horses.

After the storm new birds began to arrive. March 30 *Tyrannus verticalis* and *T. vociferans* appeared simultaneously in small scattered flocks, each species keeping a little away from the other. Males and females were taken that day from the same flock. *T. vociferans* passed through before April 22. *T. verticalis* settled down in several places. March 31 our only specimen of *Spizella socialis arizonæ* was taken, as also *Sitta carolinensis aculeata*.

Icterus bullocki, *Turdus aonalaschkæ auduboni*, *Sylvania pusilla pileolata* came April 2, *Stelgidopteryx serripennis* April 4, *Vireo gilvus* April 5, *Helminthophila celata lutescens*, *Dendroica nigrescens*, and *Spinus lawrencei* April 6, *Geothlypis trichas occidentalis* April 7. April 5 our type specimen of *Trochilus violajugulum** was taken. April 10 we first found *Vireo solitarius cassinii* which, very possibly, had up to this date escaped our attention; also on this day, just above the Mission in the mouth of the cañon, our sole *Myiarchus cinerascens*.

Large flocks of *Numenius hudsonicus* came to the mud flats on the 11th, *Recurvirostra americana*, *Totanus melanoleucus*, and *Anas cyanoptera*, all sparingly, on the 19th. *Tringa minutilla* from March 17 to April 4 was common; later on much less so. *Pipilo maculatus megalonyx* April 16, *Petrochelidon lunifrons* April 17, *Ardea candidissima* April 24, completes our list of species taken. April 21 the Shore-birds came in large numbers, as also a few Terns, but as we had packed up for the North we could not preserve skins, and hence did not collect.

More than once during our stay a hot morning was followed by squalls from the north, which on clearing left the peaks of the Coast Range slightly whitened with snow. The fall of temperature in the valley was very sudden and sharp. After such squalls, and on very windy days, *Micropus melanoleucus* came down to the lower lands in numbers.

* Auk, Vol. V, p. 168.